



**U.S. Department of Justice
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Western District of Texas**

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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS LEADER OF MULTI-KILOGRAM COCAINE AND MARIJUANA
IMPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION ORGANIZATION**

(Del Rio, Texas) **United States Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that a federal jury in Del Rio convicted 26-year-old Manuel "Meme" Guardiola, the leader of a multi-kilogram cocaine and marijuana importation and distribution organization based in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, on drug trafficking charges.

The jury, who returned their verdict yesterday afternoon, convicted Guardiola of all charges: Conspiracy to import more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, Conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, Conspiracy to import more than 5 kilograms of cocaine, and Conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 5 kilograms of cocaine.

After deliberating in the morning and into the early afternoon, the jury found that between May 1, 2001 and February 26, 2002, Manuel "Meme" Guardiola conspired to import multi-kilogram loads of both cocaine and marijuana into United States from the Republic of Mexico. Testimony revealed that these loads of cocaine and marijuana would be smuggled into the United States from the Piedras Negras area, then be transported to the destination cities of Dallas and Houston, Texas. Further evidence elicited at trial revealed a highly structured narcotics organization which was operated on both sides of the Rio Grande River. During this investigation, law enforcement officers seized five loads of cocaine weighing a total of 300 kilograms and three seizures of marijuana weighing in excess of 600 kilograms.

Guardiola remains in federal custody pending sentencing. He faces between 20 years and life imprisonment. U.S. District Judge Alia Moses Ludlum, who presided over the trial, scheduled sentencing for September 25, 2003, at 1:30 p.m. This case was investigated by agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection. Assistant United States Attorneys Ernest Gonzalez and Daniel Kinnicutt are prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

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